

# James Roney

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[recenzja]

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Tekst jest udostępniony do wykorzystania w ramach dozwolonego użytku.

de *Carrières de Falun* de Hoffmann, «Rayon de l'Eden» – la topique génésiaque de la *Création de la femme* de Victor Hugo. Parmi les jardins du monde trouve aussi sa place l'idylle de bonheur du noble terrien – *Pan Tadeusz* – ce mythique refuge poétique de Mickiewicz contre l'histoire tragique de la Pologne: «L'oiseau blanc du bonheur».

Donnons la parole à Przybylski lui-même en citant son propre résumé – les «Jardins après la tempête romantique»:

Les classiques créaient uniquement de beaux jardins. La poésie des jardins, éblouissante, étonnamment riche et pleine de sagesse, était en revanche l'oeuvre des romantiques. [...] ils installaient des jardins de bonheur partout là où s'épanouissait l'amour. Ils ont aussi fondé un jardin dans la sphère du subconscient. Au milieu des cimes blanches des Alpes ils ont découvert le jardin verdoyant de la vie. Dans les profondeurs de la terre ils ont trouvé le jardin de la lumière mystique, ensorcelée dans les pierres précieuses et les métaux. Et enfin ils ont créé des jardins mythiques auxquels n'avaient accès ni la réalité empirique, ni le temps historique. [...] les romantiques ne connaissaient pas un seul jardin universel. Chaque jardin romantique était autre et introduisait dans cet ensemble combien magnifique de parcs quelque dissonance. Les romantiques en effet connaissaient les jardins de la vie et les jardins de la mort, ceux de l'art et de la nature, de la liberté et de la trahison, de l'amour et du meurtre, de la souffrance et du bonheur, de la tragédie et de l'idylle. Se promener dans ces parcs c'est comme s'engouffrer dans le chaos, dans le supplice de l'équivoque (p. 150–151).

Le romantique ne trace pas de jardins, il les transforme d'une manière créatrice, il les sacre en *natur naturans*.

Rés. par *Alina Siomkajlo*

Trad. par *Lucjan Grobelak*

**Problemy polskiego romantyzmu (Problems of Polish Romanticism)**, Series 1, ed. by M. Żmigrodzka and Z. Lewinówna, Ossolineum, Wrocław 1971, 408 pp.; Series 2, ed. by M. Żmigrodzka, Ossolineum, Wrocław 1974, 353 pp.

These two volumes, prepared by the Romanticism Workshop of the Institute of Literary Research of the Polish Academy of Sciences, contain studies devoted to various aspects of Polish Romanticism understood as a general cultural phenomenon which dominated all aspects of Polish life during the first half of the nineteenth century.

The following summaries can cover only some of the many topics touched upon. There are eight articles in the first volume.

Alina Witkowska (*Romantic Nation: Defeat and Triumph*) describes the way in which Polish intellectuals solved the problem of national identity after the partition of Poland. She describes this as largely a process of reconciling historical time, in which Polish national institutions had ceased to exist, with mythical time, in Eliade's use of the term, in which the nation continued to exist or would exist again. Her account is divided into three time periods from the third partition: the Napoleonic wars and the Kingdom of Poland, from then until the uprising in 1830, and after the failure of the uprising.

During the first period there were two common positions: some people believed that the nation had in fact irrevocably ceased to exist while others attempted to rediscover its existence by collecting memorabilia from the past. After the Napoleonic wars and the creation of the Kingdom of Poland had proven that the nation did, in fact, still exist, three extreme positions of reconciling that past with the historical present. Bishop Woronicz viewed Poland's occupation as punishment for past sins which was part of God's plan and would last only until those sins were redeemed. As Witkowska points out, there was no real conflict between historical and mythical time. Also, the question of Poland's national character disappears.

The other two views, on the other hand, opposed historical and mythical time. Kazimierz Brodziński put forth the view that the Polish national character changed in an organic manner as its essence was perfected. He saw this essence as being of a peaceful agrarian character. Maurycy Mochnacki opposed this view by arguing that history was composed of dynamic oppositions and transformations. Rather than for an idyllic past he argued for the passions of the Middle Ages as revealed in Scandinavian myths and the creations of the Polish Romantic poets who were his contemporaries. During the uprising the organic, idyllic view was advocated by conservatives while Mochnacki's dynamism became the property of revolutionaries.

After the uprising, Witkowska argues, these ideas developed into three conflicting paths to the salvation of Poland: through suffering,

through the realization of a mission to save the world, and through democracy and the people. The first view was expressed by Brodziński himself in his messianistic writings where he argued that Poland's suffering was so great that it must serve a purpose of God's plan. Adam Mickiewicz expressed the second view in his version of messianism which accepted Brodziński's organicism and idyllic view of the Slavic past but accented the active role of Poland and propagated the notion of an individual messiah. The Polish Democratic Society also accepted the myth of the idyllic Slavic past but based its plans on the democratic nature of the Polish peasant who would lead them to a new society.

Marta Piwińska's *God Lost and God Recovered: Rebels and Confessors* traces a similar line of development in the role of God in Polish Romanticism. Piwińska argues that God was essential and all-pervasive in the Romantic vision of the world. When the Romantics rebelled against reason and the social and religious institutions of the eighteenth century, they saw themselves as recreating the unity of the world by realizing God's plan. The three aspects of life in which the plan was most often discovered, or its lack bemoaned, were nature, love, and history. In Poland because of the partitions only history played a major role. The loss of Poland's freedom placed Polish Romantics in the impossible position of having to choose between love for Poland and faith in God's perfection. Piwińska's point is that although many Romantics challenged God, often producing magnificent verse such as Mickiewicz's *Great Improvisation*, God was so much a part of their culture, so necessary to their world view that Romantic thought was never satisfied until it found a way to reconcile Poland's disaster with God's plan. Thus, the Polish Romantics generally changed from rebels who desired faith into prophets who created it.

Adam Sikorski's *Two Attitudes of Messianism* is a study of two extreme forms of Polish messianism: Józef Maria Hoene-Wroński's attempt to develop a philosophical system based on reason and Andrzej Towiański's attempt to develop a way of life based on the heart. Sikorski argues that these two philosophies share many similarities because of the nature of Romantic messianism which sought to discover a total vision of the world capable of penetrating to the very essence of reality and human existence. Thus,

although Wroński defended reason, his quest for a total vision caused him to give a role to immediate experience as the means of discovering the most basic truths. Towiański, on the other hand, favoured the heart but allowed reason to serve as a means of demonstrating the truths the heart discovered. In addition, both men believed that history was the realization of God's plan for man and the world and that a great man was required to reveal (Towiański's new messiah) or discover (Wroński's great thinker) the next stage of that plan. Sikorski feels that the presence of these similarities in the work of two such different thinkers may eventually prove to reveal the limits of nineteenth century messianism.

Krystyna Krzemieniowa in *For a New Civilization* claims that the journalism of Maurycy Mochnacki, Jan Ludwik Żukowski and Józef Bolesław Ostrowski is best viewed not as literary criticism which was part of the struggle between the Romantics and the Classicists but as cultural politics which used literature as a forum for discussing its vision of a new civilization. It was part of a struggle for public opinion. Krzemieniowa shows how the three men borrowed from German philosophers but changed the German ideas to suit Polish needs. They all shared the view that society was an organic system developing inevitably towards a new civilization, and all attempted to determine Poland's role in that future Europe. However, Żukowski emphasized social and economic problems while Ostrowski called for political reforms, and Mochnacki advocated national self-knowledge and a rediscovery of the national identity. Krzemieniowa asserts that this led them to different views of revolution. Żukowski saw it as uniting Polish culture with the necessary changes in European civilization. Ostrowski felt it would change Poland's political structure along the liberal-bourgeois model. Mochnacki, finally, saw it as bringing about a rebirth and change in national life. Unfortunately, the hopes of all three were disappointed by the failure of the 1830 Uprising and the final number of their journal, "Polish Courier," ended with a cry of despair.

Maria Janion's *The Romantic Vision of Revolution* discusses in depth the various ways in which Polish Romantics viewed revolution. She begins by describing the contradictory way in which Seweryn Goszczyński depicted the Cossack revolt in his Romantic poem *Zamek kaniowski* (*Castle of Kaniów*). Goszczyński vacillated

between portraying revolution as an outbreak of the eternal evil of human nature and portraying it as a result of social oppression.

A similar opposition appears in Zygmunt Krasiński's *Nie-Boska komedia* (*Undivine Comedy*). Janion argues that Krasiński's play shows him to be a typical nineteenth century conservative caught in the dialectical tension of yearning for a past he knows can never be returned. As a result, he searches for consultation in the future where he sees only the cataclysm of revolution. On the other hand, he also feels that revolution has a certain internal justification based on the suffering of those who are revolting.

Unlike Goszczyński and Krasiński, Adam Mickiewicz supported total revolution without any reservations. He felt that Europe's freedom and Poland's freedom were interrelated, that only the overthrow of the kings and the existing social order could bring about the rebirth of Poland and vice versa. This was combined with a feeling that deeds were more important than words. Hence his rejection of poetry for military and revolutionary activity and his cult of Napoleon. Janion asserts that the latter was based on Napoleon's uncompromising war with the society Mickiewicz opposed.

Janion next turns her attention to the mysticism of Juliusz Słowacki who combined in revolution the ideas of blood which redeemed man's sins and of the angel of vengeance. Janion describes how his doctrine of the spirit revealing and creating itself in time led him to praise revolution as the destroyer of old, no longer necessary, forms of the spirit. This was combined with a mystical optimism which saw Poland as being redeemed by her suffering.

Janion closes her article with a description of the work of the Polish left Hegelians Gustaw Ehrenberg, Ryszard Berwiński and Edward Dembowski. Dembowski paraphrased Hegel by saying what is creative is real and by embracing revolution as both creative and real. He also polemized with Mickiewicz by emphasizing the role of the people in revolution. Berwiński introduced into this line of thought Feurbach's notion of God as created by man. Janion concludes that this was a natural development of the revolutionary tradition of Polish Romanticism.

Maria Żmigrodzka's *History and the Romantic Epic* also analyzes the effect of the partitions on a particular aspect of Polish Romanticism, in this case the attempt to create a new Romantic

epic to replace the now defunct classical canons. She asserts that the Romantics turned to the epic in an attempt to create a new synthesis at the nineteenth century world which had been fragmented by unsuccessful revolution and restoration. Her major point is that the Polish Romantic epic evolved under the influence of a dialectical tension between an individualistic questioning of the existing world order and a rebuilding of that order on the basis of an optimistic world view. Her article describes how this dialectical tension created two highly original and diametrically opposed Romantic epics in Poland: Mickiewicz's *Pan Tadeusz* and Słowacki's *Król-Duch (King-Spirit)*. Mickiewicz based his synthesis on a return to the time of the Napoleonic wars when Poland's independence seemed to be regained. In this atmosphere he creates a vision of the continuity of the elite of the rural Polish nobility which is integrated into universal history by the presence of Jacek Soplica, a Napoleonic soldier. Słowacki's mystical epic is based on the revelation of the presence of the spirit in the actions of Poland's early kings and more recent heroes. It represents a synthesis of individual and universal, of history and infinity based on the belief that Poland has a special role to play in the inevitable progress of the world toward future salvation.

Helena Kapelusz's *Romanticism and Folklore* is an attempt at sketching out the influences of folklore in Polish Romantics. Her main point is that the Romantics reacted to Polish folklore on the basis of Romantic esthetics and through the prism of Western folklore as expressed in Western Romantic literature. Thus, the Polish Romantics did not make much use of Polish folk songs because they lacked the miraculousness demanded by Romantic esthetics and the historical stratum found in the English ballad. The Romantics found the former in Polish folk tales and beliefs and the latter in legends. Kapelusz describes many of the more important borrowings, such as the legend of sleeping knights who will rise to fight new wars. She also notes that the most important geographical source was the Eastern area, specifically the Ukraine.

Janina Kamionkowa's *Romantic Custom. A Reconnaissance* is an exploration of the social institutions and personality models of Polish Romanticism. Before Romanticism Polish society consisted of three major groups: the sentimental and classical culture of the aristocracy which patterned itself after the King's court, the Sarmatian culture

of the rural nobility and the beginnings of what Kamionkowa terms the puritanical-franklinesque form of bourgeois culture. Kamionkowa maintains that in the early part of the nineteenth century the center of social and cultural activity gradually shifted from the court to the club and social organization through the intermediary of the Romantic salon. This change was made possible because of the Romantic emphasis on individual creativity and accomplishment rather than on birth and rank. It was accompanied by a change in personality types dictated by the Romantic belief that with the death of the old society a new one had to be created. The result was the glorification of various creative types, for example, the old veteran of the Napoleonic wars, the conspirator and revolutionary, and, most of all, the artist. The latter which was the dominant Romantic hero, appeared in three types: dandy, Bohemian and prophet-bard. Kamionkowa shows that in Polish Romanticism the emphasis placed on revolutionary activity caused the prophet-bard and revolutionary-conspirator to become the most admired cultural heroes.

The second volume has an identical format to that of the first. It is convenient to consider the articles as falling into the thematic groups. The first, and largest, group is concerned with the way in which Romantics perceived the world around them. Maria Janion's *The Forge of Nature* describes the importance of nature in the world view of Romanticism. She asserts that Romanticism was a nature-centered world view formed by the process of opening up the closed cosmos of the eighteenth century, changing the concept of nature from that of a mechanism to an organism and ascribing to man the role of the self-consciousness of that organism. Thus, nature became a language and man's and the poet's purpose was to understand that language. This led to the formation of the Romantic theory of metaphor and symbol. As Janion points out, the difference between Romanticism and Realism is often based on whether reality is viewed in terms of causality (Realism) or correspondence (Romanticism). Janion closes her article by describing how this interest in the secrets of nature led to an interest in underground forces and the subconscious, an interest which later led the Romantics to associate revolution with volcanoes as a force which destroys in order to create. It also led to the description of the revolutionary underground as miners and blacksmiths forging the world of the future.

Halina Krukowska's *The Night Side of Romanticism* begins with

a juxtaposition of the eighteenth century's preference for general, universal experiences and Romanticism's emphasis on concrete personal experience. In Polish Romanticism this experience was associated first with personal and then with national misfortune. An important role was played by night as the time when this misfortune was most directly revealed. Krukowska discusses the role of women, widows, and dreams as sources of such revelation. She also notes that Romanticism strove to unite the lonely personal experience of night with the sense of unity conveyed by the light of day. She concludes her article with the claim that Mickiewicz's *Dziady* (*Forefathers*) convey the possibility of such a synthesis in the folk knowledge of the people while Goszczyński's *Castle of Kaniów* shows the total domination of night.

Another aspect of the same topic is discussed in Alina Kowalczykowska's *The Romantic Other World*. Kowalczykowska demonstrates that, despite their origin in what was generally held to be low class fiction, "other worldly" phenomena are not mere literary devices but an important part of Romantic ontology. Her statement is based on an analysis of Enlightenment and Romantic conceptions of the "other world." Jan Śniadecki, perhaps the leading figure of the Polish Enlightenment, held that we should confine ourselves to what reason can perceive. Adam Mickiewicz in his early works represented the position that "other worldly" phenomena are essential to any full understanding of this world and that folk beliefs held more truth than the rational book of Śniadecki. With the development of mysticism the situation was reversed as any difference between this and the other world disappeared and this world became only a battleground for forces of the other world.

Józef Bachórz in *On Polish Romantic Exoticism* traces the way in which the Romantics rebelled against the Eurocentrism of the eighteenth century. The Enlightenment felt that European culture was at the height of world culture and used other cultures only as utopian or anti-utopian visions of European life. When the Romantics attacked the existing European culture, they turned to other cultures in hope of finding the true, authentic life missing in Europe. This led to an emphasis on local color and detail. Bachórz states that the two most important areas for Romanticism were the North and the East. The South was ignored as being associated

with Classicism. The East was seen as a land of past glory, naturalness, individuality, eroticism and, sometimes, cruelty. Bachórz concludes that messianism put an end to exoticism because the Polish messianists saw themselves as bringing truth to rather than seeking truth in other cultures.

Maria Żmigrodzka in *Myth—Legend—History* outlines the relationships between these three concepts in Romantic thought. Unlike the Classicists who saw myth as part of man's childhood and valued it only as a poetic device which could be given a rational, didactic reinterpretation, the Romantics praised myth for its symbolic value as an intuitive perception of truths which were inaccessible to reason. As Żmigrodzka notes, there was, however, considerable disagreement among the Romantics over the following issues: Did myth convey knowledge about God or about the godliness of man? Did myth represent an individual or a collective perception of reality? Did myth convey a conservative or a radical utopia? Were mythical symbols of a linguistic or plastic nature? Did myth reveal truths which existed in a separate eternal realm or reveal truth developing in time? The last issue was central to the Romantic view of history. Żmigrodzka closes her article with a discussion of three Polish Romantics: Zorian Dołęga Chodakowski who felt that folk legends revealed the true nature of the Slavic people as it existed before Christianity distorted it, Maurycy Mochnacki who took the view that Christianity played a helpful role in helping the nature of the Slavs evolve in history, and, finally, Adam Mickiewicz who sought a synthesis between the poetic value of pagan legends, the religious demands and legends of Christianity and the political needs of Poland. Żmigrodzka concludes that Napoleon represents such a synthesis in Mickiewicz's thought where he appears as a hero of mythical proportions acting in history to realize God's plan.

The remaining three articles are devoted to different aspects of the Romantic conception of the hero. Ryszard Przybylski in *The Decline of Reasonable Heroism, or Prolegomena to the Romantic Heroism* discusses the fate of the Neo-Classical epic in partitioned Poland. Przybylski argues that, whereas the Renaissance used classical models of the epic in the abstract world of Platonic ideals, Classicism attempted to employ them in describing historical material. This

caused a tension between the Enlightenment's conception of history and the Greek models on which their poetics was based. Przybylski says that this gave rise to the reasonable heroism exemplified in Voltaire's *Henriade* where the hero's heroism consists of submitting to the rational order governing the universe and exemplified in existing governments. This model came into conflict with the historical reality of Poland where the Polish government had ceased to exist. Przybylski discusses three examples of Polish Neo-Classical epics: a Jesuit poem which glorified Peter the Great's victory at Poltava, the *Jagiellonida* which glorifies the Polish-Lithuanian union and Czar Alexander who had promised to reunite the two, and *Stefan Czarniecki* which glorifies the cult of Mary as the special patron of Poland. Przybylski says that the prevalent nineteenth century belief in the special mercy was probably a psychological compensation for historical suffering and notes that Mickiewicz was violently opposed to it. This opposition led him to create the notions first of tragic heroism modelled on Byron's heroes and then of religious heroism based upon Christ.

Marta Piwińska's *Man and Hero* describes the nature of the Romantic hero. She asserts that Romantic biographies were based on the pattern of Napoleon born in the provinces and coming into conflict with the world which does not allow him to assert his greatness. Piwińska traces the major events in such biographies: a childhood which is mysterious and sad and marked by signs of future greatness, a first love and/or friendship which is harmonious and confirms the hero's self-image, a youthful suicide attempt when that self image is threatened, and, finally, experience which leads to an overwhelming realization of the instability of life and an extreme consciousness of death. The hero often is overwhelmed by this pluralistic view of life and sinks into demonism, even at times losing the ability to distinguish between the inner and outer world, between the "I" and the "not-I". This leads the "I" to exist simultaneously on historical, metaphysical and existential planes of reality and makes possible the existence of the prophet-bard. Furthermore, as Piwińska concludes, the consciousness of the disparity between what the hero could have become and what he was led him to attempt to change the world around him. Thus, revolution was a natural result of the romantic biography. In Poland the Romantics

came to view themselves either as demons destroying the world or as Christ suffering to redeem the world.

In *Portrait of Genius* Janina Kamionkowa describes the change in the image of the poet brought about by Romanticism. Romanticism portrayed its poets in terms of a new symbolism which vacillated between individual and general and presented the poet as the ideal man, the model for other men. All men were like him to be inspired and creative and to attempt to raise reality to the ideal by expressing the ideal in their works and person. In Poland this led to the idea of the Romantic poet as combined prophet and bard. Kamionkowa argues that this marks a real change in artistic consciousness from conceiving of art as reflecting reality to viewing it as the perception, or even creation of the inner meaning of reality. This new concept of art, which is still active today, depends on symbolism and requires the active participation of the reader who must discover the meaning contained in the work.

Sum. by *James Roney*